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The gradual movement of nonwhite workers, 90 percent of whom are Negroes, into higher skilled and better paying jobs has continued since the mid-1950's. Despite these gains, large gaps exist between white and nonwhite workers as measured by such indicators of social and economic well-being as occupational shifts, manpower utilization, income, and educational attainment.

Nonwhites are concentrated in less skilled jobs and are subject to more unemployment than whites. The jobless rates of nonwhites are at least one and one-half times higher than for whites in every age-sex group; the rates are three times as high for some age groups. Unemployment bears disproportionately on the nonwhite worker whatever his industry or occupation. Once out of a job, the nonwhite tends to remain jobless for a longer period. Nonwhite families have failed to keep pace with the rise in average income. During the past two decades, nonwhites have narrowed the educational gap between themselves and white persons. However, since the mid-1950's, differences in the level of educational attainment between whites and nonwhites have remained essentially unchanged.

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Economic Status of Nonwhite Workers, 1955–62

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THE CENTER FOR CULTURAL STUDIES
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Economic Status of Nonwhite Workers, 1955–62

MATTHEW A. KESSLER*

THE GRADUAL MOVEMENT of nonwhite workers (over 90 percent of whom are Negroes) into higher skilled and better paying jobs has continued since the mid-1950's. However, despite these recent gains, large gaps continue to exist between white and nonwhite workers, as measured by most indicators of social and economic well-being.[1]

Nonwhites continue to be concentrated in less-skilled jobs and are subject to more unemployment than whites. The jobless rates of nonwhites are still at least one and one-half times higher than for whites in every age-sex grouping, and for some age groupings are three times as high. Unemployment bears disproportionately on the nonwhite worker whatever his industry or occupation. Not only is he subject to more frequent spells of unemployment; once out of a job, he has tended to remain jobless for a longer period of time.

After achieving relatively substantial gains in money income during the early postwar period, nonwhite families have failed to keep pace with the rise in average income of white families since the mid-1950's, despite the continued shift of nonwhite workers into higher paying jobs.

During the past two decades, nonwhites have narrowed the educational gap that had historically existed between themselves and white persons, a development which has helped to foster their steady but slow movement up the occupational skill ladder. Since the mid-1950's, however, differences in the level of educational attainment between whites and nonwhites have remained essentially unchanged.

Industry and Occupation Changes

Throughout the postwar period, there has been a dramatic shift of nonwhites out of agriculture. In 1962, 12 out of every 100 employed nonwhite workers were employed in agriculture, compared with 16 out of 100 in 1955 and 21 out of 100 in 1948.[2] (See table 1.) The precipitous fall in this proportion throughout the postwar period is a result of the exodus of nonwhites from sharecropping and marginal farms, particularly in the South, as well as the growth of alternative employment opportunities in other sectors of the economy.

In this quest for a higher money income, however, many nonwhites who shifted to nonfarm employment paid the price of greater job insecurity. As they often lack education and vocational training and are limited by discriminatory hiring and layoff practices, their employment opportunities are restricted to relatively unskilled and semiskilled occupations. These are the very lines of work that are particularly sensitive to the business cycle and are vulnerable to large-scale reductions through automation. Although professional and clerical occupations have provided a major source of both white and nonwhite employment growth since the mid-1950's, nonwhites continue to be overrepresented in such occupations as domestic servants, laborers, and semiskilled operatives

White-Collar Occupations. Between 1955 and 1962, an increasing number and proportion of nonwhite workers entered the higher skilled and better paying white-collar occupations. In 1962, however, only 17 percent of all employed nonwhites were in white-collar occupations, compared with 47 percent of white workers (table 2). White workers in this group outnumbered nonwhites 28 to 1, in marked contrast to their comparative representation in the civilian labor force (9 white for each nonwhite worker). The number of nonwhites in white-collar jobs has risen by 50 percent since 1955, about the same rate of increase as noted during the early postwar period and two and one-half times the increase for whites. However, unless there is a substantial acceleration of these trends, the percentage of nonwhite workers in white-collar employment will still be substantially below that of white workers for many years.

Nonwhite workers have been entering the professional, technical, and clerical fields faster

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[1] This article reviews recent trends (1955–62) in the employment status of nonwhites in the United States, with particular emphasis on occupational shifts, manpower utilization, income, and educational attainment. The analysis of the two most recent business cycles, 1957–59 and 1960–62, uses seasonally adjusted quarterly average unemployment data not previously available. This article updates and complements a series of studies on the economic status of the Negro by the Bureau of Labor Statistics; the last previous BLS study in the series was *The Economic Situation of Negroes in the United States*, rev. 1962 (U.S. Department of Labor, Bulletin S–3).

[2] Differs slightly from occupational totals shown in table 2 since the industry classification includes some occupations not classified as farm workers in the classification by occupation (e.g., agronomists, veterinarians, and bookkeepers).

TABLE 1. EMPLOYED PERSONS, BY INDUSTRY AND COLOR, 1948, 1955, AND 1962 [1]

[Percent distribution]

Industry	White			Nonwhite		
	1962	1955	1948	1962	1955	1948
Total employed:						
Number (thousands)	60,749	56,608	53,434	7,098	6,496	5,944
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Goods-producing industries	41.4	46.2	48.6	36.2	41.5	47.5
Agriculture	7.2	10.1	12.6	11.7	15.7	21.1
Mining, forestry, and fisheries	1.1	1.4	1.5	.4	.7	3.0
Construction	5.4	6.5	6.0	5.7	5.3	4.4
Manufacturing	26.8	28.2	28.5	18.4	19.7	18.9
Service-producing industries	58.6	53.8	51.4	63.8	58.5	52.5
Transportation and public utilities	7.0	7.4	8.3	5.4	6.0	6.4
Trade	19.8	20.2	20.1	13.8	13.5	11.5
Service and finance	26.8	21.5	18.5	30.1	24.7	31.4
Private households	2.6	2.2	1.7	15.8	16.3	16.1
Educational services	5.5	4.0	2.8	4.4	3.0	2.1
Professional services, except education	6.9	5.3	3.9	7.4	4.9	3.3
Business and repair services	2.8	2.5	2.4	2.2	1.4	1.0
Other services, including entertainment	4.3	3.5	4.2	7.2	7.2	7.4
Finance, insurance, and real estate	4.7	4.0	3.5	2.1	1.9	1.5
Public administration	5.1	4.6	4.6	5.4	4.2	3.3

[1] Data for 1948 and 1955 not adjusted to reflect changes in definition of unemployment adopted in 1957.

NOTE: Because of rounding, sums of individual percentages may not equal 100.

than other white-collar occupations. These occupations have risen by 60 percent since the mid-1950's, reflecting expanded job opportunities, particularly in public administration. The largest concentration of nonwhite workers in the white-collar group (almost 1 out of 2) is employed in such clerical occupations as office machine operators, bookkeepers, typists, secretaries, stenographers, and filing and recording clerks.

The largest relative gains posted by nonwhites between 1955–62 were in professional services (such as hospital, medical, and other health services, welfare and religious institutions) and business and repair services—all of which grew nearly 70 percent in the 7-year span. This approximated advances noted in the earlier postwar period and compared with about a 35-percent increase for whites since 1955. Nonwhites also recorded relatively sharp gains in the growing field of educational services—up by 60 percent compared with a 50-percent rise among whites. Governmental policies assuring nondiscriminatory employment practices may account for the continued gains registered by nonwhites in public administration since the mid-1950's—up 40 percent compared with an 18-percent rise among whites.

Nonwhite employment in the professional and technical fields has increased at a somewhat faster rate than for whites since the mid-1950's. Yet in 1962, only about 5 percent of all employed nonwhites were engaged in these occupations compared with 12½ percent of all white workers. While teaching provides a major source of professional employment for both whites and nonwhites, a higher proportion of nonwhite than white professional workers (mainly women) were employed as elementary and secondary school teachers in 1962—nearly two-fifths and one-fifth, respectively. Indicative of nonwhite recent progress in the professional field is the fivefold increase in their employment in the growing engineering occupations during the 1950's compared with a two-thirds rise for the occupational group as a whole. Nevertheless, nonwhites accounted for only 1½ percent of all professional engineers by 1960.[3]

Only 4 of every 100 nonwhites were employed as managers, officials, and proprietors and as sales

TABLE 2. EMPLOYED PERSONS, BY OCCUPATION GROUP AND COLOR, 1948, 1955, AND 1962 [1]

[Percent distribution]

Major occupation group	White			Nonwhite		
	1962	1955	1948	1962	1955	1948
Total employed:						
Number (thousands)	60,749	56,608	53,434	7,098	6,496	5,944
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
White-collar workers	47.3	42.1	39.1	16.7	12.0	9.0
Professional and technical workers	12.6	9.8	7.2	5.3	3.5	2.4
Managers, officials, and proprietors, except farm	11.2	11.1	11.6	2.6	2.3	2.3
Clerical workers	15.8	14.2	13.6	7.2	4.9	3.3
Sales workers	7.0	6.9	6.7	1.6	1.3	1.1
Blue-collar workers	38.4	38.0	40.5	39.5	41.3	39.7
Craftsmen and foremen	13.6	14.1	14.6	6.0	6.2	5.3
Operatives	17.5	20.3	21.0	18.9	20.9	20.1
Laborers, except farm and mine	4.3	4.7	4.9	13.6	13.8	14.3
Service workers	10.6	9.0	7.9	22.8	21.6	20.3
Private household workers	2.1	1.8	1.5	14.7	14.8	13.6
Other service workers	8.5	7.2	6.4	18.1	16.8	14.7
Farm workers	6.8	9.9	12.4	11.0	14.8	21.0
Farmers and managers	4.0	6.0	7.8	2.7	5.0	8.5
Laborers and foremen	2.8	3.9	4.6	8.3	9.8	12.6

[1] See footnote 1, table 1.

NOTE: Because of rounding, sums of individual percentages may not equal 100.

[3] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population, 1960, General Social and Economic Characteristics, United States Summary*, PC(1)-1C, table 68; and *U.S. Census of Population, 1960, Characteristics of the Population, United States Summary*, Vol. II, Pt. 1, table 128.

workers in 1962, a somewhat higher proportion than in 1955 and 1948. The proportion of white workers in these occupations in 1962 was much higher (19 percent).

Blue-Collar Occupations. After registering small gains in the early postwar period, the proportion of nonwhites employed in blue-collar occupations fell slightly between 1955 and 1962, returning to levels prevailing in 1948. Blue-collar jobs have accounted for two-fifths of total nonwhite employment throughout most of the postwar period. During the more recent 7-year period, the proportion of white workers in these occupational categories also declined moderately.

More than 8 of every 10 nonwhite workers in blue-collar jobs (compared with 6 out of 10 white workers) continued to be in either the semiskilled or unskilled occupations. These jobs tend to be concentrated in those goods-producing and related industries (such as transportation) which are quite sensitive to the business cycle. Moreover, the demand for this type of labor has diminished steadily during the postwar period as a result of automation and other technological developments.

Service Occupations. Nonwhites are still seven times as likely as white workers to be employed as private household workers (including maids, babysitters, housekeepers, chauffeurs, laundresses). During the earlier postwar period, the number of nonwhite private household workers remained virtually unchanged, while nonwhite employment in other service occupations, such as hospital attendant, barber, and cook, rose significantly (25 percent). During the 1955–62 period, this trend appears to have continued, with little change in nonwhite private household

TABLE 3. UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, BY COLOR, 1947–62 [1]

Year	White	Nonwhite	Nonwhite as percent of white	Year	White	Nonwhite	Nonwhite as percent of white
1962	4.9	11.0	224	1954	4.5	8.9	198
1961	6.0	12.5	208	1953	2.3	4.1	178
1960	5.0	10.2	204	1952	2.4	4.6	192
1959	4.9	10.7	218	1951	2.8	4.8	171
1958	6.1	12.6	207	1950	4.6	8.5	185
1957	3.9	8.0	205	1949	5.2	8.2	158
1956	3.3	7.5	227	1948	3.2	5.2	163
1955	3.6	7.9	219	1947	3.3	5.4	164

[1] Data for 1947–56 not adjusted to reflect changes in definition of unemployment adopted in 1957.

TABLE 4. UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, BY COLOR, AGE, AND SEX, 1948, 1955, AND 1962 [1]

Age and sex	White			Nonwhite		
	1962	1955	1948	1962	1955	1948
Males, 14 years and over	4.6	3.4	3.1	11.0	8.2	5.1
14 to 19 years	12.3	9.6	8.3	20.7	13.2	7.6
20 to 24 years	8.0	6.3	5.8	14.6	11.2	10.6
25 to 34 years	3.8	2.5	2.4	10.5	8.0	4.2
35 to 44 years	3.1	2.4	1.9	8.6	7.4	4.5
45 to 54 years	3.5	2.8	2.2	8.3	5.8	3.1
55 years and over	4.1	3.7	2.8	10.1	7.8	3.5
Females, 14 years and over	5.5	3.9	3.4	11.1	7.5	5.2
14 to 19 years	11.5	8.2	6.9	28.2	16.2	10.4
20 to 24 years	7.7	4.5	3.6	18.2	11.4	8.9
25 to 34 years	5.4	3.8	3.2	11.5	9.1	6.1
35 to 44 years	4.5	3.4	2.3	8.9	4.9	3.3
45 to 54 years	3.7	2.9	2.3	7.1	4.6	2.4
55 years and over	3.5	2.8	2.6	3.6	4.4	2.2

[1] See footnote 1, table 1.

employment and a substantial gain (18 percent) in the number of nonwhites entering other service jobs. Among white workers also there was a steady rise in the proportion of service workers outside of private households throughout the postwar period—up between 20 and 25 percent in each of the two periods. In 1962, as in the earlier postwar period, proportionately twice as many nonwhite as white workers were in these rapidly expanding but still relatively low-paying and low-to-moderately skilled service occupations.

Manpower Utilization

Unemployment. Throughout the postwar period, unemployment has consistently fallen most heavily on the nonwhite worker. Comprising only a tenth of the civilian labor force in 1962, nonwhites accounted for two-tenths of the jobless total. This disparity was evident among both men and women.

The unemployment rate for nonwhites, at 11.0 percent in 1962, stood at its third highest level in the postwar period (table 3) and was only slightly lower than rates recorded in the recession affected years of 1958 and 1961. Their 1962 unemployment rate was double the jobless rate of white workers. This relationship has persisted throughout the postwar period, and in fact tended to increase in the latter part of the postwar period. In the years 1947–49, the nonwhite unemployment rate averaged about 60 percent higher than for white workers, whereas in each year from

TABLE 5. UNEMPLOYMENT RATES OF EXPERIENCED WORKERS,[1] BY COLOR AND MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUP, 1955 and 1962

Major occupation group	White		Nonwhite		Nonwhite as percent of white	
	1962	1955	1962	1955	1962	1955
All occupation groups[2]	4.9	3.5	11.0	7.7	224	208
Clerical and sales workers	3.8	3.2	7.7	7.0	203	219
Craftsmen and foremen	4.8	3.9	9.7	8.8	202	226
Operatives	6.9	5.5	12.0	8.4	174	153
Private household workers	3.1	3.0	7.1	5.6	229	187
Other service workers	5.3	5.2	10.8	8.8	204	169
Farm laborers and foremen	3.9	3.0	5.8	6.3	149	210
Laborers, except farm and mine	11.0	9.8	15.8	12.1	144	123

[1] The base for the unemployment rate includes the employed, classified according to their current jobs, and the unemployed, classified according to their latest civilian job, if any; excludes the unemployed persons who never held a full-time civilian job.

[2] Includes the following groups not shown separately: Professional and technical workers; managers, officials, and proprietors; and farmers and farm managers.

1954 through 1962, it was consistently twice as high.

Nonwhite boys and girls 14 to 19 years of age continued to have one of the highest jobless rates of any age-color group. (See table 4.) In 1962, the unemployment rate of nonwhite teenagers remained near 25 percent, compared with about 12 percent for white youth of the same ages. Since 1955, the jobless rate of nonwhite teenagers has increased faster than for white youngsters—up about 60 percent among nonwhites compared with a 30-percent rise for white youth.

In 1962, nonwhite men in both the 25–34 and 35–44 age brackets (primarily family breadwinners) recorded unemployment rates about three times as high as for white men (about 9 and 3 percent, respectively). A differential of similar proportions was recorded in 1955.

Even within the same major occupation group large differences in unemployment rates persisted, with rates for nonwhites generally substantially exceeding those of white persons. Among both white and nonwhite workers at the lower end of the occupational hierarchy, both nonfarm laborers and operatives usually have relatively high unemployment rates; however, differences are not (and have not been) as great as in most other occupation groups (table 5). This may reflect a high proportion of such workers in highly unionized mass-production industries, some of which provide for nondiscrimination clauses in their collective bargaining agreements.[4]

Differences in overall unemployment rates by color are partially explained by the higher concentration of nonwhites at the lower rungs of the occupational skill ladder. Even assuming there were no differences in the occupational distribution of both groups, however, nonwhites still would have had a higher unemployment rate than whites in 1962. But assuming that the experienced nonwhite civilian labor force had the same occupational distribution as the experienced white civilian labor force, and applying actual jobless rates of nonwhites to this adjusted occupational distribution, the difference in the overall jobless rate between whites and nonwhites in 1962 would have been cut in half. Under these assumptions, the unemployment rate for nonwhites would have been 8.1 rather than 11.0 percent of their number in the labor force, compared with an actual rate of 4.9 percent for whites.

Nonwhite workers not only have higher rates; they are also subject to more frequent spells of unemployment. For persons experiencing any unemployment throughout the year, the chances are much greater that nonwhites rather than whites will have repeated spells of unemployment during the year. About 3 of every 10 nonwhite men who had been unemployed sometime during the year were subject to 3 spells or more of unemployment in 1961, compared with 2 of every 10 white men who had some unemployment. Moreover, nonwhite workers spend a considerably longer period of time on layoff or looking for work be-

[4] See "Antidiscrimination Provisions in Major Contracts, 1961," *Monthly Labor Review*, June 1962, pp. 643–651.

TABLE 6. EMPLOYED PERSONS IN NONAGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES, BY FULL- OR PART-TIME STATUS AND COLOR, 1956 AND 1962

[Percent distribution]

Full- or part-time status	White		Nonwhite	
	1962	1956	1962	1956
All employed persons:				
Number (thousands)	56,388	52,661	6,267	5,733
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
At work—				
On full-time schedules[1]	85.7	88.4	78.6	79.5
On part time for economic reasons[2]	3.2	3.0	10.3	9.0
Usually work full time	1.6	1.8	2.8	3.3
Usually work part time	1.6	1.2	7.5	5.7
On part time for other reasons; usually work part time	11.1	8.6	11.0	11.5

[1] Includes persons who actually worked 35 hours or more during the survey week and those who usually work full time but worked 1 to 34 hours during the survey week because of noneconomic reasons (bad weather, illness, holidays, etc.).

[2] Includes persons who worked less than 35 hours a week because of slack work, material shortages, job turnover, inability to find full-time work, etc.

NOTE: Because of rounding, sums of individual percentages may not equal 100.

tween jobs. Since 1954 (earliest year for which these data are available), nonwhites have consistently accounted for 20 to 30 percent of both long-term unemployment of 15 weeks or more and very long-term unemployment of 27 weeks or more, as the following tabulation shows:

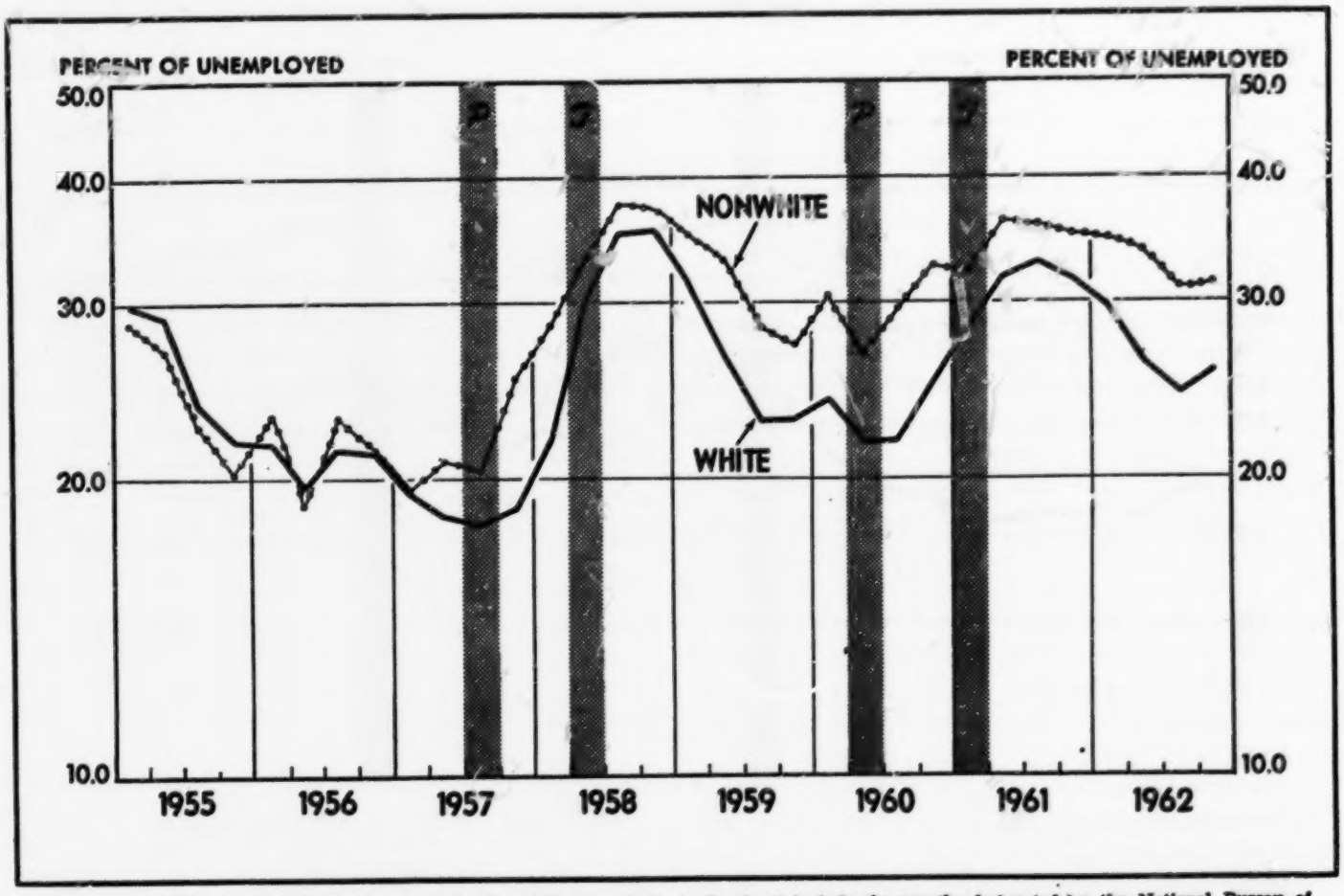
Year	Nonwhites as a percent of total unemployed for—	
	15 weeks or more	27 weeks or more
1962	25.9	28.4
1961	22.5	23.6
1960	24.9	26.0
1959	24.3	26.2
1958	22.0	23.0
1957	22.4	23.8
1956	21.8	21.6
1955	20.0	21.5
1954	20.4	24.0

Since the peak of the 1957 cycle (on a seasonally adjusted basis), nonwhites have consistently had a higher proportion of their total unemployment concentrated in the group out of work 15 weeks or more than have the white unemployed (chart 1).

In the 1957–59 cycle, after seasonal adjustment, unemployment among both whites and nonwhites rose by about 70 percent between the third quarter of 1957 (prerecession peak) and the second quarter of 1958 (recession trough). (See chart 2.) During the downturn phase of the most recent cycle (1960–62), the number of jobless white and nonwhite workers both increased by similar proportions from prerecession peak to the recession trough—up 30 and 25 percent, respectively. In the upturn of the 1957–59 cycle (four quarters after the trough had been reached), differences in the rate of decline in unemployment among whites and nonwhites were not significant. There was, however, a relatively sharper drop in the rates for whites in the 1961–62 recovery period. During

Chart 1. Unemployment 15 Weeks or More as Percent of Total Unemployment, by Color, 1955–62

[Seasonally adjusted quarterly averages]



NOTE: The quarters indicated as peaks or troughs (P and T, respectively, in the chart) include the months designated by the National Bureau of Economic Research as the turning points in the general business cycle.

this later period, whites recorded a 25-percent decline in joblessness, compared with only a 10-percent dip among nonwhites. By the subsequent quarter, however, the improvement from the trough was about the same for both groups.

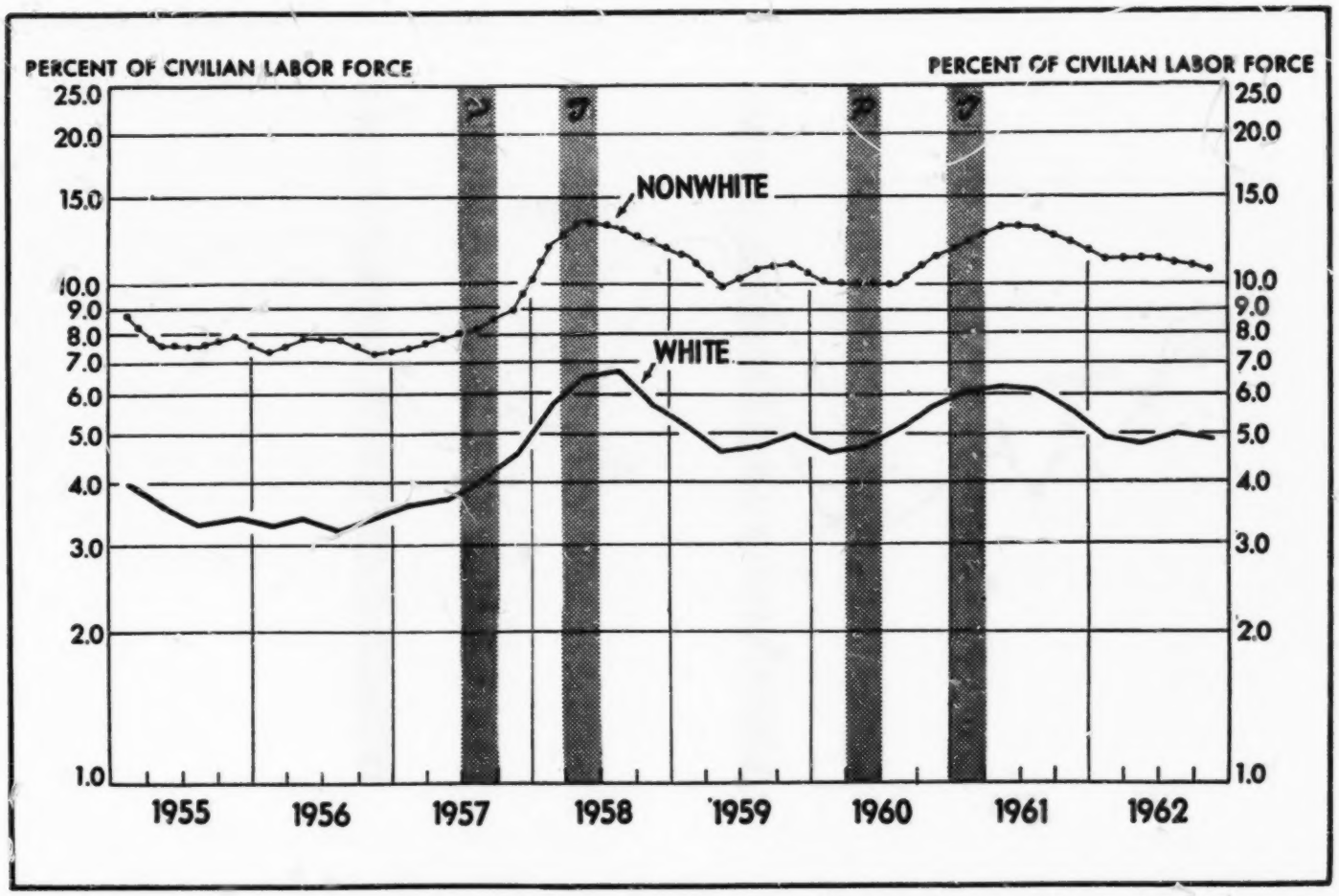
Part-Time Employment. In every year since 1956, a higher proportion of nonwhite than white persons were working at part-time jobs. In 1962, 21 percent of all employed nonwhites, compared with 14 percent of all white workers, were working less than 35 hours a week; however, the rate of "economic part time" continued to be three times as high for nonwhites as for white workers—10 percent of total nonwhite employment as compared with 3 percent of total white employment (table 6). In 1962, as in previous years, nonwhites accounted for about one-fourth of all nonfarm workers on part time for economic reasons while constituting only 10 percent of nonagricultural employment.

Nonwhite workers in 1962 accounted for 16 percent of those on reduced workweeks because of economic reasons (such as slack work and material shortages), while comprising 35 percent of those on part time because they were unable to find full-time jobs. This latter category is likely to have a high proportion of young workers and adult women, many of whom are employed in private household and other service occupations.

The proportion of nonwhite workers on part time for economic reasons has risen significantly over the past 6 years, while that of white workers has remained about the same. On the other hand, the entire rise in voluntary part-time employment was among white workers.

Chart 2. Unemployment Rates, by Color, 1955–62

[Seasonally adjusted quarterly averages]



NOTE: The quarters indicated as peaks or troughs (P and T, respectively, in the chart) include the months designated by the National Bureau of Economic Research as the turning points in the general business cycle.

TABLE 7. CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES, BY AGE, COLOR, AND SEX, 1948, 1955, AND 1962

Age and sex	White			Nonwhite		
	1962	1955	1948	1962	1955	1948
Both sexes	58.1	57.1	58.7	60.0	61.9	63.5
Male	78.6	82.8	84.2	76.4	81.8	84.8
14 to 19 years	49.8	45.6	50.7	38.4	48.8	58.4
20 to 24 years	86.5	86.5	84.4	89.3	89.7	85.6
25 to 34 years	97.4	97.8	98.0	95.3	96.8	96.3
35 to 44 years	97.9	98.3	98.0	94.5	96.2	97.2
45 to 54 years	96.0	96.7	95.9	92.2	94.2	94.6
55 to 64 years	86.7	88.4	89.6	81.5	85.1	88.4
65 years and over	30.6	39.5	46.6	27.2	40.0	50.3
Female	38.6	33.7	30.6	45.6	44.4	44.4
14 to 19 years	29.7	30.5	32.8	24.0	25.3	30.4
20 to 24 years	47.1	45.8	45.1	48.6	48.7	47.1
25 to 34 years	34.1	32.8	31.3	52.0	51.3	50.6
35 to 44 years	42.2	39.9	35.1	59.7	56.0	53.2
45 to 54 years	48.9	42.7	33.3	60.5	54.8	51.1
55 to 64 years	38.0	31.8	22.3	48.1	40.7	37.6
65 years and over	9.8	10.5	8.6	12.2	12.1	17.3

The difference in the proportion of white and nonwhite workers who work at year-round full-time jobs is appreciable. Only one-half of nonwhite men compared with two-thirds of white men with work experience were reported to have worked steadily at full-time jobs in 1961.[5] This difference has persisted since the late 1940's when such data first became available. During the postwar period, nonwhite women made sizable gains in full-time year-round jobholding, while the proportion of white women in this category remained relatively stable. This improvement among nonwhite women has resulted in part from their shift away from farm occupations—jobs where work schedules tend to be unstable. In 1961, there were proportionately almost as many nonwhite as white women with full-time year-round jobs (32 and 38 percent, respectively).

Labor Force Participation. A salient development in labor force activity of nonwhite workers in recent years has been the sharp decline in labor force participation rates of teenage boys and older men (table 7). In 1962, rates for nonwhites in these groups were below those of white men in the same ages. The especially sharp decline for nonwhites continued a secular trend, including the long-term decline in agriculture, increased years of schooling, and liberalized retirement programs—developments which have also affected whites greatly in recent years.

During the 1950's, at least 70 percent of the net migration from farms consisted of young people under 20 or who reached 20 during the decade.[6] In general, farm youth, whether in or out of school, tend to be an integral part of the farm labor force. Their rates of labor force participation are usually higher than those of nonfarm youngsters of the same ages. In view of the continuing decline in the proportion of nonwhites employed in agriculture between 1955 and 1962, it is reasonable to assume that many of these young farm leavers were nonwhite. A sharp rise in the number of youngsters enrolled in school, as well as unusually high jobless rates which have prevailed in recent years among nonwhite teenagers, may have contributed to their drop in participation.

Participation rates of both white and nonwhite older men (65 and over) dropped very significantly between 1955 and 1962—down about 9 and 13 percentage points, respectively. Probably because of the trend toward earlier retirement, participation has also been declining (although to a much smaller extent) among men 55 to 64 years of age, with the nonwhites again showing sharper declines.

Among men in the central age group 25 to 64 years, where participation rates tend to be the highest, nonwhite men continued to have somewhat lower rates than whites. This may be due to a higher incidence of disabling illness and injury among nonwhite men, associated with their concentration in manual, more hazardous occupations.[7]

Nonwhite women historically have participated in the labor force in greater proportions than white women. The postwar rise in labor force participation rates of adult women has occurred both

TABLE 8. MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME, BY COLOR, 1948–61

Year	White	Nonwhite	Nonwhite as percent of white	Year	White	Nonwhite	Nonwhite as percent of white
1948	$3,310	$1,768	53.4	1955	$4,605	$2,549	55.4
1949	3,232	1,650	51.1	1956	4,998	2,628	52.6
1950	3,445	1,869	54.3	1957	5,166	2,764	53.5
1951	3,559	2,632	52.7	1958	5,300	2,711	51.2
1952	4,114	2,333	56.8	1959	5,643	2,917	51.7
1953	4,392	2,461	56.0	1960	5,835	3,233	55.4
1954	4,339	2,410	55.5	1961	5,981	3,191	53.4

SOURCE: *Current Population Reports, Income of Families and Persons in the United States* (U.S. Bureau of the Census), Series P-60, Nos. 6-39.

[5] See "Work Experience of the Population in 1961," *Monthly Labor Review*, December 1962, pp. 1347-1358.

[6] See *Current and Foreseeable Trends in Rural Population*, paper presented by Calvin L. Beale, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, at the 40th Agricultural Outlook Conference, Washington, Nov. 14, 1962.

[7] See *Current Population Reports, Employment of White and Nonwhite Persons: 1955* (U.S. Bureau of the Census), Series P-50, No. 68, p. 2.

among white and nonwhite women. Despite these changes, only about two-fifths of all white women 25 to 64 were in the labor force in 1962, compared with nearly three-fifths of nonwhite women of the same ages.

Income and Education

Income. Nonwhites tend to have a somewhat larger number of wage earners per family unit and higher rates of labor force participation than whites, which tend to reduce white-nonwhite differentials. A partially offsetting factor is the relatively high concentration of nonwhites in agriculture, where income received in kind is excluded. Family income is nevertheless a useful criterion of socio-economic wellbeing since many expenditure patterns relate to the family unit as a separate entity.

The average (median) income of both white and nonwhite families has increased quite substantially in dollar amounts during the past two decades. Very notable income advances by nonwhites were made particularly during World War II and the early postwar period as a result of wartime induced shortages of unskilled workers and governmental action designed to raise the income level of lower paid workers. The family income of nonwhites climbed from less than 40 percent of white family income in 1939 to nearly 60 percent in the early 1950's. Although since then nonwhites have continued to raise their money income, they have failed to bring about a further narrowing of income differentials between the two groups. In fact, on a relative basis, nonwhite family income as a percent of white family income has shown little change since 1952–53 (table 8). This phenomenon seems to be due to the fact that during the past decade, professional, technical, and managerial workers (where nonwhites are still very underrepresented) showed much larger relative income gains (up nearly 70 percent) than workers at the lower rung of the occupational skill ladder (where nonwhites are still disproportionately concentrated). The incomes of laborers and service workers rose by only 40 percent during this same period, compared with an increase of about 180 percent during the forties.[8]

In 1948, nearly 8 of every 10 nonwhite families had money incomes of less than $3,000. (See table 9.) This proportion had dropped to 6 out of 10 by 1955 and to 5 out of 10 by 1961, but it was about 2½ times the proportion of white families in this relatively low income category. Since 1955, the proportion of nonwhite families in the $5,000 to $10,000 category had increased one and one-half times (to 23 percent), but was still well below the comparable proportion of white families in that category (45 percent). At the upper end of the income scale—$10,000 or more—6 percent of nonwhite families were in this group in 1961, in sharp contrast to their negligible proportion in 1948 and 1955 (about 0.5 percent in both years). Despite recent employment gains made by nonwhites, which is reflected by their movement into higher money income groups, a substantial gap continues to exist, with proportionately three times as many white families in the $10,000 or more bracket.

TABLE 9. TOTAL MONEY INCOME OF FAMILIES, BY COLOR, 1948, 1955, AND 1961

[Percent distribution]

Family income	1961		1955		1948	
	White	Nonwhite	White	Nonwhite	White	Nonwhite
All income classes	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under $3,000	18.6	47.5	25.7	57.3	42.6	78.1
$3,000 to $4,999	19.4	24.4	30.3	28.3	35.2	16.3
$5,000 to $9,999	44.7	22.8	36.6	13.7	19.1	5.3
$10,000 and over	17.1	5.6	6.5	.6	3.1	.4
Median income	$5,981	$3,191	$4,605	$2,549	$3,310	$1,768

NOTE: Because of rounding, sums of individual percentages may not equal 100.

SOURCE: *Current Population Reports, Income of Families and Persons in the United States* (U.S. Bureau of the Census), Series P–60, Nos. 6, 24, and 39.

TABLE 10. MEDIAN INCOME OF FAMILIES IN 1961, BY COLOR AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF FAMILY HEAD

Years of school completed	Total	White	Nonwhite	Nonwhite as percent of white
Elementary	$4,074	$4,378	$2,559	58.0
Less than 8 years	3,279	3,656	2,294	62.7
8 years	4,772	4,911	3,338	68.0
High school	6,032	6,186	3,863	62.4
1 to 3 years	5,644	5,882	3,449	58.6
4 years	6,302	6,390	4,559	71.3
College	8,210	8,288	6,444	77.8
1 to 3 years	7,250	7,344	5,525	75.2
4 years or more	9,264	9,315	7,875	84.5

SOURCE: *Current Population Reports, Income of Families and Persons in the United States: 1961* (U.S. Bureau of the Census), Series P–60, No. 39.

[8] See Herman P. Miller, "Is the Income Gap Closed? No!" The New York Times Magazine, November 11, 1962, pp. 50–58.

Educational Attainment. Very large strides have been made during the past two decades in reducing the persistent educational gap between nonwhite and white persons. By 1962, the average white person 25 to 29 years of age had completed 12.5 years of schooling, compared with 11.2 years of schooling completed by the average nonwhite person in the same age bracket.[9] For nonwhite men, this represented a gain of some 4½ years of school since 1940; for whites, the average gain was 2 years. This narrowing of the educational gap during the postwar period can be largely attributed to the rising proportion of nonwhite youngsters who have been enrolled in school. At the elementary school level, the differential has been markedly reduced. But at the high school level, despite some narrowing of differentials during this period, the percentage of nonwhites attending school falls appreciably below that of white students.

Since the mid-1950's, however, the gap has essentially remained the same, with both groups showing a rise of about 1 full year in median school years completed, which departs from previous longrun trends. Recent income data by color and educational attainment of the head of the family also support conclusions found in other studies [10] that the income gap between whites and nonwhites is not completely closed even when educational levels of both groups increase (table 10). However, the differential is substantially reduced at the college level, with the family income of nonwhite college graduates in 1961 about 85 percent of that of white college graduates.

[9] See "Educational Attainment of Workers, March 1962," pp. 504–515 of the *Monthly Labor Review*, May 1963.

[10] See Herman P. Miller, *Income of the American People* (New York, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1955), pp. 42–48; and *Current Population Reports, Income of Families and Persons in the United States: 1956* (U.S. Bureau of the Census), Series P–60, No. 27, pp. 10–11.

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